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Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 01250 261309Z

55
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /026 W
---------- 055319
R 261246Z FEB 75
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5720
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 1250

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PLO, IS, LE
SUBJ: ISRAELI VIEW OF LEBANESE BORDER SITUATION

REF: A) TEL AVIV 0958; B) TEL AVIV 1180; C) BEIRUT 2461

1. THOUGH WE HAVE BEEN INCLINED TO DISCOUNT STORIES OF A "TRUCE" ALONG ISRAELI-LEBANESE BORDER (IN PART BECAUSE CHIEF OF STAFF GUR HAD DENIED THERE WAS ONE--REF A), SEVERAL INFORMED ISRAELIS HAVE SEPARATELY PROVIDED INTERESTING INTERPRETATIONS OF LULL ON LEBANESE FRONTIER IN PAST WEEKS. THEY SAY THAT LEBANESE AND ISRAELIS WERE DISTURBED BY BUILDUP OF VIOLENCE FOUR TO FIVE WEEKS AGO THAT LED TO STRONG ISRAELI REACTION AT KFAR SHUBA. ACCORDING TO ONE SOURCE, ISRAELI CONCERN REVOLVED AROUND POSSIBILITY THAT LEBANON MIGHT FEEL COMPELLED TO ACCEPT TYPES AND AMOUNTS OF WEAPONS FROM OTHER ARAB GOVERNMENTS THAT COULD CHANGE NATURE OF MILITARY THREAT FROM NORTH BY ENDANGERING FLANK OF IDF FORCES CONFRONTING SYRIA.

2. CONCERNED THAT THE MATTER NOT GET OUT OF HAND (AND, ACCORDING TO ONE SOURCE, ON INITIATIVE OF FORMER DEFMIN DAYAN), ISRAELIS SUGGESTED A "SORT OF TRUCE" TO LEBANON.
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ISRAELIS APPARENTLY INDICATED TO LEBANESE THAT THEY WOULD NOT TAKE

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STRONG RETALIATORY ACTION TO MINOR INCIDENTS, IF LEBANON TOOK BETTER CARE OF SITUATION ON THEIR SIDE OF BORDER. LEBANON COOPERATED, ISRAELIS BELIEVE, BECAUSE PREVIOUS ISRAELI RETALIATION HAD CREATED VERY DIFFICULT SITUATION IN BORDER AREAS (EXODUS OF CIVILIAN POPULATION, EFFECTIVE PLO DOMINATION OF AREA, ETC). PLO COOPERATED BECAUSE IT HAD BEEN BADLY HURT BY THESE ISRAELI ACTIONS.

3. COMMENT: FOLLOWING FEBRUARY 22 INCIDENT, AS REPORTED IN REF B, SOME ISRAELIS MAY HAVE BEEN INCLINED TO THINK PLO DECIDED TO GO ON OFFENSIVE AGAIN AS A GENERAL POLICY MATTER. BUT WE ASSUME THEY WOULD PROBABLY ACCEPT ANALYSIS IN REF C THAT THIS WAS ATTEMPT AT "SPOILING ACTION." IN THIS RESPECT, INFORMED GOI MINISTER TOLD US THAT DESPITE FEB 22 INCIDENT ISRAEL WANTED TO KEEP THINGS COOLED DOWN--PARTICULARLY IN PRESENT PRE-NEGOTIATION PERIOD. HE NOTED ISRAELIS WOULD EXERCISE RESTRAINT IN RETALIATING TO MINOR BORDER INCIDENTS, THOUGH THIS OBVIOUSLY WOULD NOT HOLD IF SOME MAJOR "SPECTACULAR" WERE TO TAKE PLACE. KEATING

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